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Descriptive report of new honors program permitting 20 superior seniors to study visual arts in Italy. During the first semester, students will concurrently study the Italian language and culture and will be enrolled in studio courses or seminars at the Rhode Island School of Design Center. The second semester will be devoted to a thesis project under the supervision of an Italian designer.

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RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

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" An Overseas Honors Program for
Visual Arts Students "

One of the most frequent charges made against higher education in the United States is that students are spoon-fed far beyond the point in their educational development where this is a defensible practice. As a professional college of design in which the student is allowed great latitude throughout his undergraduate program as to how he will solve his design problems, RISD is not guilty of this charge. Therefore, it seems especially appropriate for the best of their seniors to be enabled to make the transition from design students to self-sufficient designers as participants in an honors program in a foreign country in which some excellent work in the visual arts is being done.

Since 1955 the administration of Rhode Island School of Design has been considering the feasibility of establishing and operating a small honors adjunct of the School in one of the European countries. Its major purpose will be to give their most promising seniors and graduate students an opportunity to avail themselves of the rich and unique resources which some European countries offer to the visual artist. Another important contribution will accrue (to education in the visual arts in particular and to our society in general) as a result of their plan eventually to invite superior upper division or graduate students from other accredited colleges of art to participate in the center once it is well established. Furthermore, it is deemed reasonable to assume that the addition of an overseas program will be of great assistance to Rhode Island School of Design in its persistent efforts to attract the best possible students to the college. Assignment of members of the faculty to the overseas center on a rotating basis will enable these teachers to learn at firsthand the state of the visual arts in Europe and to return to their students in Providence at the end of their year abroad with rekindled enthusiasm for their teaching duties. Still another aim of the undertaking will be the improvement of relations between Americans and European nationals through contacts between our art teachers and our best students with their opposite numbers in the countries visited. Perhaps the quality of the work being done by the young contemporary American artists will help to rectify the foreign conception of the United States as a nation of uncultivated materialists.

On the basis of the School of Design's representation at all three of the biennial conferences on student exchange programs conducted since 1955 by the Department of State and the Institute of International Education, a thorough search of the pertinent literature, and discussion and correspondence with experts in the field of international education, the college administration was convinced that no program remotely similar to that here described had been established.

Much of the most imaginative and original work in the fine and applied visual arts is currently being done in Italy. Talks with Dr. John Adams, Director of the Syracuse Semesters in Italy, Gordon Boyce, President of The Experiment in International Living and similar persons whose breadth of experience in the field commands a respectful hearing led to the conclusion that Rome, Florence, Venice or any other Italian city north of Rome would lend itself very well as a site for an honors program for visual artists. Therefore, arrangements were made for qualified applicants to the program from the School of Design student body to enroll in intensive courses in Italian being conducted at the recently established language laboratories of Brown University with which Rhode Island School of Design has a cooperative student exchange arrangement. Satisfactory performance in the language courses at Brown was a prerequisite to final selection for participation in the overseas program.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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In December 1959 the members of the junior and sophomore classes (391 students) at RISD were asked for an expression of interest in their being considered as participants in the center abroad during their senior year. Preliminary selection of thirty-three students from these volunteers for language study at Brown University was based on each student's cumulative grade point average in both liberal arts and professional design courses, on recommendations of faculty members with whom each student had studied, and on the rating assigned by a selection committee after individual interviews designed to estimate the emotional maturity and sincerity of purpose of the applicant had been conducted. Final selection of twenty students, members of the class of 1961 or possibly of first-year graduate students in a two-year program in painting or sculpture was made during May 1960.

The twenty participants with one or both of the supervising faculty members and their families will travel to Italy on the Cristoforo Colombo, arriving at Naples about September 11. They will be transported by bus to the resident center in Rome which during the Spring of 1960 was rented and during the summer prepared for the living and instructional accommodation of the group. During the first semester in Italy the students will concurrently pursue their study of the Italian language and culture and be enrolled in studio courses or seminars at the RISD center with both of the supervising faculty members. Concurrently, each of the participants will make three-week to one month "home-visits" with Italian families which will have been arranged by the Italian representative of The Experiment in International Living. Although the student will live with his Italian "family" during this period, and presumably will speak nothing but Italian he will continue in his course work at the resident center.

In keeping with Rhode Island School of Design's existing practice of senior thesis preparation, as soon after the Christmas recess as is feasible each student will be assigned to work on a tutorial basis anywhere in Italy with a recognized Italian designer in the student's specialized area of design. These mature critics will be chosen from lists of Italian designers prepared by members of the RISD faculty in consultation with the American cultural attaché in Rome and the representatives of the Experiment in International Living. It will be the responsibility of the two RISD faculty members residing in Rome to arrange these tutorial assignments.

Under the supervision of his Italian mentor each student will carry out a thesis project, demonstrating the knowledge of visual design which he has acquired throughout his four undergraduate years. Periodic visits during this second semester, perhaps every two weeks, will be made to each of the students by one of the resident faculty members. One week-end each month the entire group may re-assemble at the headquarters for a group criticism and discussion of any problems which they may have. On May 15, 1961 the academic program for the year will terminate. The senior theses produced by these honors students will be evaluated by the faculty members in Italy. The paintings, sculptures or other objects created by the students, or colored slides of these degree projects, will be sent to Providence for inspection by the division chairmen and the department heads. Each senior in the honors program will be given the choice of returning to Providence to participate in the 1961 Commencement Exercises or to have his degree awarded in absentia. If he chooses the second alternative, the student may independently travel or study in Europe until September 1961. Through arrangements with the Council on Student Travel, the students will return to the United States at their convenience. The cost to each student selected for participation in this honors program will be \$1700.00 exactly the same amount that he would pay were he to spend his senior year in residence at Providence. The

seventeen hundred dollar fee will include not only tuition, and board and room fees for the academic year, but will also provide round-trip transatlantic transportation and essential travel costs in Europe.

It is obvious that the actual cost of operating this honors program is greatly in excess of the charge to be levied on each participant. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, believing this program to be a worthwhile and unique innovation in the pursuit of educational excellence for superior students in the visual arts, has generously made a grant of \$75,000 to Rhode Island School of Design. This sum of money will be disbursed over a three-year period, at the end of which time the program is expected to be financially self-sustaining.

Dr. John R. Frazier, President of Rhode Island School of Design has appointed Dr. Frank J. Deignan as director of the college's European Honors program. Dr. Deignan has been affiliated with RISD since 1950 as Dean of Students and Professor of Psychology. Associated with him in setting up and operating the center in Italy will be Professor Gilbert A. Franklin, Chairman of the Division of Fine Arts, and Professor Samuel F. Hershey, Chairman of the Freshman Foundation Division. Dr. Deignan and Professor Franklin went to Rome in April, 1960 to make arrangements for the instructional and living facilities which will be required for the operation of the honors program. Professor Hershey supervised the final selection of the student participants. He and his family, and that of Dr. Deignan, will accompany the honors students to Italy on the Italian Line ship, the Cristoforo Colombo which is scheduled to sail from New York on September 3. Professor Hershey, as Director of Education, will have overall supervision of the design education of this talented group of twenty young men and women. According to Dr. Deignan, Director of the Honors Program, the undertaking has two claims to distinction. "We believe ours to be the first overseas honors program to be established for superior seniors in the visual arts, and we are certain that it is the first program to be considered sufficiently pioneering to have attracted financial support from the Carnegie Corporation."